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# THE POTATO BLIGHT IN IRELAND.

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A PLAIN STATEMENT OF FACTS COLLECTED FROM VARIOUS  
INDEPENDENT AUTHORITIES.

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## NOTE.

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This pamphlet does not profess to do more than give, in a collected form, the opinions of various competent authorities upon the nature and extent of the Potato Blight in Ireland.

The general conclusion, derived from a perusal of each of these authorities, seems to be that, in many parts of Ireland, the Potato crop is quite equal to the average of former years, indeed, in many cases, it is above it. The area of failure seems to be confined to the western sea-board ; and even here, in many cases, the failure is not universal.

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While this pamphlet was going through the press, a valuable series of articles appeared in the *Daily Graphic* from the pen of Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., which practically bear out the conclusions arrived at by the different writers and authorities quoted in the following pages.

# THE POTATO BLIGHT IN IRELAND.

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*From "BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE," November, 1890.*

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A GREAT outcry was raised some four or five weeks ago about the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, although, as a matter of fact, nobody then knew how the potato crop would turn out, inasmuch as digging had scarcely begun. There was a deep art in raising this outcry so prematurely, since it was impossible for anybody to say whether the potatoes had failed or not. The Nationalist agitator showed his usual cunning in boldly asserting that whereof he could have no certain knowledge, and a section of the British public manifested its usual short-sightedness and gullibility in accepting as demonstrated fact what could at best be only wild conjecture. The assumption that the potato crop had failed was made the excuse for another No-Rent manifesto. Messrs. Dillon and Healy had shown their hands by advising their countrymen to pay no rent, but to live upon their means through the winter and spring, and then give to the landlord whatever surplus might be left. (Everybody knows what the surplus would be!) On August 27, Mr. Healy, at a National League meeting in Dublin, strongly urged the Irish tenants to pay no rent until they had provided for their own necessities; and the same day he said, in an interview with a correspondent of the *St. James's Gazette*, that "if the choice is between paying rent and living" (there is much virtue in an "if"), "there can be no doubt as to which alternative we, or any other men possessed of ordinary humanity, would advise. . . . In most cases there will be no question of advice for us; payment of rent will simply be impossible." This interview, it is worth while noting, took place in Mr. Healy's "new house in the beautiful bay of Dalkey." Equally significant is the fact that Mr. Healy did not advise Irish tenants to pay no fees to Nationalist lawyers until they saw what

surplus they might have after living through the winter, and that he did not pronounce the payment of such fees to be "simply impossible."

## DONEGAL.

I commenced my inquiries in Donegal, which, for some reason or other, has been dropped by the Nationalists lately, though it figures prominently in the manifesto to the American Committee. My reasons for going to Donegal were that it is the *locale* of the Olphert estate, of which we have heard much, and are likely to hear more, and that a good portion of its seaboard is occupied by the Rosses and the parish of Gweedore, which are among the congested districts. A day or two after I got into Donegal, the Romish clergy of the diocese of Raphoe passed a series of resolutions, which affirmed that grevious distress was impending owing to the failure of the potato crop, and that 40,000 persons would be brought to starvation if relief were not given at once. The anonymous Liberal Unionist banker, whose statement was published in the *St. James's Gazette*, declared that the fields were "black with rotting potatoes all round the Olphert estate and the worst parts of the congested Donegal districts." Mrs. Ernest Hart, writing in the *Times* of September 13, with regard to the state of things in Gweedore, affirmed that "within the last month the blight has rapidly spread and destroyed the crop on which the people largely depend for food. . . . It is estimated that one-fifth of the population of Gweedore will be able to hold their own and need no help, but that four-fifths will suffer more or less from the loss of their crops." Now I will not characterise these statements as fabrications, nor will I impugn the motives of their authors, but I do unhesitatingly declare them to be ludicrous exaggerations. I traversed the poorer parts of Donegal, and I saw no sign of approaching famine. The people are well clothed and well nourished. Hunger, if it existed, would most surely show itself in the faces of the people, especially of the children; but I detected no indication of it, though I saw the children in the schools as well as in their own homes. Moreover, I found a crop of potatoes everywhere. In the worst parts of Gweedore and the Rosses, I saw potatoes dug out of the earth, and in most cases they were fairly numerous and of medium size. At Letterkenny potatoes were selling at 3s. per cwt., or  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per stone of 14 lb. At Dunfanaghy the price was 4s. per cwt. Last year, however, the price was just half what it is now, a fact which certainly proves that the potato crop is deficient as compared with last year (when the yield was unusually large): though it also proves that people who grow potatoes for the market are just as well off this year as they were last, since they get the same amount of money

for half the produce. Both at Dunfanaghy and Gweedore I ate potatoes grown on the spot, and they were as good as I ever wish to eat. I also ate potatoes grown on the Olphert estate, and they were of good size and quality. To say that the fields in this district are black with rotting potatoes is a gross misrepresentation, which can only be the offspring of ignorance or of political design. Two or three persons with whom I conversed used the phrase "rotten potatoes"; but when I asked them to explain what they meant by it, it turned out that they merely meant that the potatoes were not so large or so good in quality as usual. A gentleman of my acquaintance in Belfast, who has a most intimate acquaintance with Donegal, was up in the most westerly corner of the county the other day, and he went into a field where they were digging potatoes. "Well," said he, "how are the potatoes turning out?" "Sure, your honour, they are all rotten." But on examining them for himself, "the devil a rotten one [to use his own phrase] could I see." The worst that can be said with regard to Donegal is that *in some parts* the potatoes are barely half a crop. This is my conclusion after careful inquiry. And this, though it may of course turn out somewhat serious to a small proportion of the people, affords no ground whatever for the absurdly exaggerated statements which have been made with a view to scaring, to cajoling, or coercing the British public. In Belfast and Londonderry the partial failure of the potato crop is regarded as an ordinary incident. The best informed men in those towns say: "Oh, we have potato disease every year, more or less; this year there is probably a little more than usual; but it is simply a question of degree." And they are both amazed and amused that so much should be made of the matter in England.

In saying what I have done as regards Donegal, I am only corroborating the statements of Mr. Jackson and Mr. Courtney. The former gentleman, addressing a meeting at Leeds on September 24, said:—

"He had travelled from Carndonagh, in north Donegal, down to Cork and Baltimore in the south, and he had also explored a large portion of the sea-coast. There was no doubt that, in some parts which were poorest and farthest from rapid means of communication, there were districts in which the potato crop was not only small in size but very deficient in quantity. There were other districts in Ireland, he believed by far the largest portion, in which the potato crop was satisfactory. . . .

. . . He did not wish to minimise the evil, or to say one word which would weaken measures which might be necessary to remedy what certainly would be a loss to the people whose crops of potatoes had failed. But at the same time he had confidence that the generally bad condition of the crops had been very much exaggerated, especially by Irish newspapers."

I inquired somewhat carefully as to the action taken by Mr. Jackson when he was in Ireland, and particularly in Donegal. My reason for doing this was that Mr. M'Fadden, the notorious priest of Gweedore, has gone out of his way to discredit Mr. Jackson's statements through the English press. Writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the priest said:—

“Mr. Jackson and General Sankey drove in a waggonette over a beautiful public road that leads through a tract of moorland beyond the inhabited portions of Gweedore, halted for luncheon at the Gweedore hotel, resumed their journey, and passed out of Gweedore without seeing Gweedore at all, or the state of its crop. And I am told that they have said that reports regarding the blight are exaggerated! They may say what they like, but it is well for the public to know that they have not seen the district.”

Mr. M'Fadden is apt to think that no visitor has seen the district unless he has seen Mr. M'Fadden; and if the visitor is a person of consequence, he is prone to consider himself aggrieved if he is not called upon and consulted. Those persons who know the facts understand perfectly well why the priest of Gweedore thus attempts to discredit Mr. Jackson's statements. Gweedore is the name not of a town or village, but of a large and straggling district many miles in extent, and Mr. Jackson might see much of it without going anywhere near Mr. M'Fadden. The Secretary of the Treasury pursued his inquiries most conscientiously, took samples of the potatoes from the fields as they were being dug, and forwarded them to England every day.

But whatever may have been the case as regards Mr. Jackson, I have seen Gweedore—the whole of it. I went to Derrybeg—partly to see the place where poor Martin was brutally murdered, and partly to see Mr. M'Fadden's own house, which is the best for miles round. I also went to Bunbeg, near which Mrs. Ernest Hart's modest premises—frequently dignified by the title of “factory”—are situated. After seeing the whole of Gweedore, and the Rosses as well, I emphatically endorse Mr. Jackson's conclusions; though I should be disposed to qualify even this by saying that I think his views on the potato crop are too pessimistic. As to Mr. M'Fadden's statements, they are wild to the degree of absurdity. He says:—

“The failure of the potato in this district is complete; the *poreens* that are in it are utterly unsafe for human food. In my opinion the failure is much greater and more uniform here than it was in 1879. [Which may be true; but being true, it only proves that the condition of things in 1879 was not half so bad as it was represented to be.] If employment is not provided, the situation will become most serious. I don't know under heaven what course I am to take. The Government is simply humbugging us.”

Before the digging of the potatoes had well commenced, the priest declared the crop to be a "complete failure." Although the people all along the road were digging up potatoes, and preparing them for cooking, one is asked to deny the evidence of one's own senses, and to believe that there are no potatoes at all. Mr. M'Fadden asserts that the Government is trying to humbug himself and his friends. The truth is, that he and his friends are trying to humbug the British Government and the British people, and I am afraid, as usual, with only too much success.

So far as the potato crop is a failure, it is largely due to the slipshod style of cultivation in vogue in Ireland. If a man sets potatoes in wet bog, what can be expected? And this is just what the majority of them do in all these poorer districts. The Irish peasantry are in no sense farmers; they do not understand, and will not make any effort to understand, agriculture; they are simply labourers, thousands of whom go to England or Scotland for the harvest, and potter about their little holdings for the rest of the year. They do nothing thoroughly. From December to March they will leave their land untouched, and during that time the water will stand on it till it is sodden, while cattle and pigs may run over it at their will. In March the "farmer" will begin to do what he ought to have done in December; the seed is put into wet and cold land; and if the season is at all unfavourable, the seed is killed before it can properly strike root. A man in the Rosses district began to dig his potatoes, and they turned out very poorly (they were Champions, of which I hear everywhere very unfavourable accounts,—"Them Champions have ruined the country," said one old man to me); another man, with land of the same character and situation, has a very good crop of potatoes, also Champions. What made the difference? In one case the land was drained, and was comparatively dry and warm; in the other case it was undrained, and was merely cold sodden bog. The first requisite of the Irish peasant farmer is—energy; the second requisite is—energy; the third requisite is—energy. If the poorest parts of Donegal, Mayo, and Galway were in the hands of people like the Montenegrins, or the Dutch, or even the French, they would make them blossom like the rose, and bring forth abundant harvests.

### EAST MAYO AND WEST GALWAY.

What I have said with regard to Donegal will apply, often even more forcibly, to other "distressed" districts, such as East Mayo and West Galway. A superficial observer passing through these districts would, especially if he were a sentimentalist, probably conclude that many of the people were living in abject

poverty. But in no country is it so misleading to judge by appearances as in Ireland. Because people live in little cabins and herd with cows and pigs, and their women and children go barefoot, many strangers conclude that they are in dire distress. But in Ireland these are not signs even of ordinary poverty. Plenty of people who have a good round sum in the bank live in exactly the same style. They do so from habit and choice, and not from necessity. In Connemara I saw the house of a man who has been a poor-law guardian, and who can produce from £200 to £500 in solid cash any day in the year (besides a large amount of cattle), but his house is as dirty and as miserable in appearance, and his children as forlorn and neglected, as any others that you can find, even in Ireland. Another instance, also in Connemara, is this: In a certain cabin, or rather in one room of the cabin, there lived and slept a man and his wife, two grown-up sons, and two grown-up daughters. This might be thought enough; but in addition there was a bull, which was tied to the daughters' bed, a litter of pigs which was under their bed, and either one or two other quadrupeds besides. Now, why did these people live like this? It was not because they were poor, for they were actually very well off. The man had even built a new house, which he refused to occupy for "fear his luck would leave him." The richest man in a certain congregation in the west of Ireland has a mud floor in his house, and his best room would be despised by many an English working man. In Ireland it is necessary to penetrate a long way beneath the surface in order to reach the heart and the reality of things. Still, there are some things that do lie upon the surface; and an observer who has any acuteness at all need not go far astray. For example, when one sees that the very dogs (of which there are a great many) are sleek and in good condition, and that the fowls are fed with meal,—when one can count as many as twenty turkeys besides smaller fowl, eight or ten head of cattle, six or eight sheep, a dozen stacks of oats and the same number of hay,—it requires no great penetration to perceive that these people are very well off. Of course I do not affirm that every Irish farmer is as well off as this, but I say that thousands of them are (and thousands more a great deal better off), and that even the poorest of them are living in rude comfort.

On the same road I met a woman of the peasant farming class, whose husband holds fifteen acres under the Hon. E. Ashley, whom she pronounced to be one of the best of landlords. This woman had on kid gloves, a stylish cloth jacket, a French merino dress, fur boa, and a fashionable hat. She was going to Sligo market. I learned from her that the people thereabouts keep from one to ten cows, and sell the butter, giving the buttermilk,

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etc., to pigs and calves. Observing a good many geese and turkeys about, I asked her how much they fetched in the market, and she informed me that dealers at Christmas gave 3s. each for geese, and 4s. for turkeys. But when I asked her about the potatoes, she replied that they were "all black." As a matter of fact, they were really good, the evidence of which was open to anybody who had eyes to see.

Between Sligo and Ballina there are even more numerous signs that the people are well off. The houses are better, and there are indications of improved taste, such as greater cleanliness, flowers, &c., and orchards begin to appear. But the women and children still go barefoot. Potatoes I saw in plenty. They were digging and pitting them; there were sacks of them on the ridges; and they stood in front of the cabins washed ready for cooking. In and around Ballina there are no signs of distress. I met there a commercial man who had been in Belmullet, and as I knew this to be one of the places where the distress was supposed to be the worst, I asked him his opinion on the matter. "Well," he replied, "all I know is that I spent only one day there, and I took £800." He thought that pretty conclusive; so did I.

Mayo has an unenviable reputation as the birthplace of the Land League, as well as in some other respects. A Connemara man would consider himself grossly insulted if you called him a Mayo man. Mr. Dillon is member for East Mayo, and in the remarks hereafter quoted he chides the people of the county for their slackness with regard to the Nationalist movement. Mr. Courtney, M.P., visited East Mayo, and afterwards declared that there was "no total failure of the potato crop except in isolated districts." He did not state that he had himself seen any district where there was a total failure of the crop, and I do not think that he could make such a statement, though I know that he went to the worst districts. I have not found any place where the crop has totally failed, and I have never met a man who knew where there was such a place. Certainly the crop has not totally failed in Mayo, either East or West. A gentleman who knows the poor districts of Ireland more intimately, probably, than any other man living, says: "The people have had good prices for their small stock for the past two or three years, and every one has a cow, and consequently a calf, to sell (and nothing is so profitable as a calf), in addition to the milk used. For those who have gone to England for wages this year—as is customary—good wages have been obtained; £10, £12, or more will be brought home by some thousands of men in both Mayo and Galway." This is the testimony of a man who knows Mr. Dillon's constituency far better than Mr. Dillon will ever do if he represents it for fifty years.

## KERRY.

Kerry is another of the poorer counties, and the position there is thus described by a resident of intelligence and position: "You wish to know if our potatoes are good. They are not; they are small and very sappy. At Lisoonaunvarna the potatoes were beastly wet, black and small. At Kilkee they were delicious in flavour and very dry; balls of flour, but small. At Glin they say that their potatoes have never been better. So you see that they vary; but to talk of a potato famine is all bosh. The country people are no more dependent on potatoes for food than you are. They use bread nowadays; and what between American flour and bacon, and the high wages that are going, they are not badly off. . . . It is a very fair season; crops are very flourishing; there has been a good deal of rain, but there has also been any amount of strong wind, and that has dried up the country."

## CONNEMARA.

Connemara is the pet country of the Parnellite and Gladstonian agitator. The British public have been literally deluged by a flood of misrepresentations (not to use a stronger epithet) with regard to this district; or, as Mr. Mitchell Henry mildly puts it—"There is an enormous amount of stuff talked about the Western peasants." But in Connemara I found virtually the same state of affairs as in the other districts to which I have referred. There are potatoes in plenty. Most of the people have geese, ducks, fowls, &c.; and the geese, at all events, they do not sell, but eat themselves. The man who possesses but one cow is a rare exception; most of them have six or eight cattle, besides sheep, &c. In a village not far from where I write, every man (with two or three exceptions) has his horse (besides cattle), and rides to mass.

Mr. Mitchell Henry, who lives in Connemara, says: "There is a great failure of potatoes all through the West, but not to the extent stated by interested politicians. Potatoes planted in February are good, but those planted, as usual, far too late, have never grown properly through the wet spring." Another evidence of the fact that it is the wretched style of cultivation (farming it cannot be called) which is chiefly in fault. Until a rational system of dealing with the land is adopted in Ireland, a wet season will always produce disaster. Yet the landlords and the British Government are to be held responsible for consequences which spring directly from the tenants' own delinquencies!

My conclusion as to the partial failure of the potato crop, and as to the probable consequences of that failure, is clear and

definite. This famine cry is another phase of the conspiracy to impoverish and ruin the Irish landlords—"the English garrison," or the friends of England.

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[FROM THE "SCOTSMAN'S" SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER.]

Now that the survey of the potato crop in the congested districts of Ireland has been completed, it may be of interest to draw together the threads which were picked up. First, as to the extent of the deficiency in the crop. In every district this varies considerably. In the most severely afflicted parts, such as the seaboard of West Cork, the wet, ill-cared for soil of Galway, and the still wetter, and equally worn-out lands of Donegal, the crop, I think, could not, as a rule, be safely stated at more than from 30 to 40 per cent. of an average yield of sound, eatable potatoes. In certain cases, probably on one holding in eight or ten, the deficiency is still greater. In just as many instances the produce of eatable tubers would be as high as from 50 to 80 per cent. cf an average crop. The cases of entire failure are few and far between.

What quantity of food, then, will these small farmers have lost in the deficiency of the potato crop? In a moderately good year their gross produce of potatoes would average about 3 to 4 tons. This year in the worst parts they, as a rule, are not likely to have more than from 1 ton to 2 tons of potatoes that are suitable for consumption by the family. Many, no doubt, will have more; a few will have even less. It has to be noted that in an average year most of the small farmers grow considerably more potatoes than they require for food for their families. Pigs and poultry are largely fed upon them, and often the cows have a small share, while small quantities are sold, or exchanged for groceries and Indian meal or flour. It is notorious, indeed, that in years of plenty potatoes are used on the small farms of Ireland in the most lavish and improvident manner. It is but right that in considering the actual extent of suffering or loss which the contraction of the food supply from the potato crop may inflict upon the small farmers, these facts should be taken into account. It may be assumed that in a year of scarcity a ton of potatoes may be made to "go much further" than in a year of plenty—this, too, without the family suffering any more serious

discomfort or inconvenience than is involved in the practice of wholesome economy. Although it may be the case that the great majority of the small farmers in certain congested districts of Ireland will raise from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons less sound potatoes this year than in an average year, it does not follow that they have lost that much of essential food for themselves and their families. They have assuredly been overtaken by a very serious misfortune. The sum of their loss, or rather, their actual suffering, however, will not, or at any rate need not, be so great as would be represented by the proportionate shortcoming in the potato crop. If they would promptly close up the ordinary channels of waste, and use the supply they have got with the strictest economy and care—in particular, if they would take a little more than ordinary trouble in cooking the potatoes and presenting them on the table in palatable forms—they would not be so badly off as the percentage of deficiency would indicate. They might make the ton and a half go as far in feeding their families as a couple of tons or more would carry them in years of plenty. A ton and a half of potatoes will supply a family with 10 lb. daily for 336 days.

A word here as to the cause of the deficiency in the potato crop on these small Irish farms. The dull, wet, sunless weather which prevailed during the greater part of the summer was undoubtedly the chief and the primary cause. It brought in its train a visitation of the potato fungus, *Peronospora infestans*, varying in severity and not quite universal. The wretched systems of culture pursued on most of these small holdings intensified the untoward influence of both the weather and the disease. The three combined have brought about the grave calamity which has overtaken so many of the small farmers of Ireland. The proportion of the mischief arising from each cannot be precisely defined. I am decidedly of opinion, however, that the mysterious and much-abused fungus has had less to do with the calamity than either the bad weather or the bad systems of culture. The last-named must get the lion's share of the blame. No doubt had the weather been favourable the potato land on these small holdings, wretchedly ill-treated as it is, would have given a ton or two more produce per acre. It is equally true, I think, that if the potato crop had been grown on these holdings in anything like proper or advantageous conditions the bad weather and the fungus could not have done a tithe of the mischief they have brought about. We have seen that when the potatoes were planted early in the season on well-drained, well-tilled land, sufficiently manured, and kept moderately free from weeds, the crop has as a rule been fairly good—about two-thirds to three-fourths of an average crop, with only a small percentage of diseased tubers. In particular, on dry soils in airy situations

very little damage has been done by the disease. On the other hand, where the crop has been grown in less advantageous conditions—on wet, poor land, worn out and “potato sick” by too frequent cropping with potatoes, choke-full of the grossest weeds, and manured very sparingly—the produce, as a rule, is sadly deficient. Even here the loss is not due so much to the actual destruction of the crop by the fungus as to the deficiency in the development of the tubers. That this deficiency in growth arises mainly from the unfavourable conditions under which the crop is grown on the majority of these holdings, cannot for a moment be doubted.

These points I have noted particularly, and I emphasise them here for the reason that in a contemplation of the recurrence of the potato plague in Ireland they seem to me to possess very grave importance. The seat of the mischief is the bad system of culture. So long as this continues, a potato plague may be expected to follow every wet season. If the disease accompany or succeed the inclement weather, which it would be very likely to do, the disaster would be all the greater. But even with little or no disease, a wet season such as the past would be sufficient to seriously curtail the crop of potatoes grown in such conditions as those under which it is raised on the vast majority of the small farms of Ireland. What inference is to be drawn from this? That by hook or crook these conditions of potato culture should be radically altered. This must take place if Ireland is to be saved from periodical distress.

There is much talk as to the propriety of the Government giving the small farmers new seed to be paid for at certain intervals. This would be a temporary relief to those who will have to eat what would otherwise have been used as seed. But there is no permanence in this remedy. To distribute costly seed to be planted in the miserably ill-conditioned, ill-cared-for, “potato-sick” land which is waiting for it would seem to be doubtful policy. It may tide over the difficulty for a year or two. It will not remove it. The only remedy of any reasonable degree of permanency and trustworthiness would be the introduction amongst these small farmers of a better system of culture—of such a system as would give the potato something like a fair chance of holding its own against the influences which oppose its healthy development. How this improved system could be introduced on many of these small holdings is a matter of extreme difficulty. There are various means, however, by which improvement might be effected, and the subject is one which demands most serious and careful consideration. But it lies outside the subject-proper of this enquiry, and I cannot conveniently further discuss it here.

What are the prospects as to famine? This is the question of most immediate importance. I shall not presume to speak upon it with absolute decision. It is a delicate question, surrounded with difficulty and with not a little uncertainty. My object has been rather to elicit facts than to draw inferences. Yet it will, perhaps, be expected that I should indicate the impressions which I formed from what I saw and learned. Actual distress cannot be general. It was, indeed, only in exceptional cases that I discovered any symptoms of approaching want. The small farmer who has at least one cow, a fair stock of poultry, a pig or two, a ton or more of potatoes, a small patch of turnips, and three or four small stacks of oats and straw (perhaps thirty to fifty bushels of oats), and an ample supply of turf for fuel, can hardly be regarded as on the brink of starvation. The great majority of the small farmers have more than one cow, and most likely also several sheep. Then, one or more members of the family may have earned a few pounds by labour in England or Scotland, or in other parts of Ireland. And in Donegal, at any rate, several shillings may be obtained weekly by knitting, spinning, weaving, sprigging, or shirtmaking. In those families to which these remarks would apply, there can be no danger of real famine or of anything approaching it. In those families which are not possessed of a cow, have lost the greater portion of their potato crop, and have little support from able-bodied men, there will undoubtedly be varying degrees of want. Towards spring many of these may require assistance to stave off starvation. There has been much discussion as to how this relief should be given. There is a concensus of opinion amongst intelligent men of all classes, and in all parts of the country against the giving of absolute charity in a wholesale fashion as in 1886, or, indeed, in any fashion excepting through the ordinary channels employed for the relief of the poor. I have heard warm sympathisers with the people assert that they would almost as soon see famine stalking the land as have the people again exposed to such degrading, pauperising, dishonest practices as occurred in connection with the relief given in 1886 and 1879.

In all the congested districts there will be during the winter a vast amount of unemployed labour—men who are well able to earn all the assistance their families are likely to require. The cry is for work for this unemployed force. By the extensive schemes of railway extension which the Government have sanctioned, and have under consideration, this will be provided to a very large extent. By other works, such as road-making and land improvement, additional employment may be given. There is therefore little likelihood of serious privation overtaking any very large section of the Irish peasantry through the deficiency in the potato crop.

Nothing is further from my desire than to misrepresent or minimise the calamity which has befallen the small farmers of Ireland. It seems right, however, to point out that this calamity consists solely of the deficiency in the potato crop. In regard to all other sources of food supply and income they are as well off as in average years. The great majority of them have lost about a ton and a half to two and a half tons of potatoes. A few have lost rather more; a good many considerably less.

The rent of these small holdings seems, as a rule, to be very moderate. In a vast number of cases it is so small as that it could hardly affect them greatly either way whether they paid it or not. On one property which I visited in Donegal there are over 800 holdings of about 10 to 13 acres, with 3 to 5 or more acres arable, and the right of pasturage on the adjoining mountains. The rent of these averages just over 17s. per annum. I was assured on excellent authority, that on this same property as over this part of the country generally, the amount annually spent on tobacco for smoking would average from 40s. to 60s. per holding. More than three rents blown away in smoke.—*Scotsman*, November 1st, 1890.

### Mr. JAMES H. TUKE.

As the public mind of England seems much perplexed by the conflicting reports which are rife concerning the extent of the potato blight, and of the area affected by the potato disease in Ireland, as well as to the necessity for measures of relief, will you allow me to state the result of careful enquiries made during a recent visit to portions of the congested districts of the west?

The circumstance of my having been one of the workers for the relief of the dreadful famine of 1846-7, and that I have since that time made the economic condition of the peasantry of the West of Ireland the subject of constant attention, gives me some advantage in forming an opinion of the actual condition of these districts at the present time, which is hardly possible to an occasional visitor, however careful his observations may be.

That the people are not by any means so dependent on the potato for their daily food as formerly, and each year consume larger quantities of wheaten flour and Indian meal.

It is important also to bear in mind that the potato crop throughout Ireland, except in the wet boggy lands of the districts

under consideration, is stated to be good, and is selling at very moderate prices. Even at Clifden (one of the poorest unions) I was told that the price in the market a fortnight ago was  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per stone.

In thus seeking to place before your readers the reasons which have led me to the opinion that there is no need for "panic" or "the cry of famine," I have no wish to minimize the absolute need which exists for close watchfulness and care on the part of the Government in the limited area to which I have alluded. There are one or two districts in Western Donegal, and several in Mayo, Galway, and some adjoining counties, chiefly (but not wholly) bordering on the sea coast, in which the quality of the soil is so unfavourable to the growth of the potato that a cold wet season is almost certain to cause a failure in the crop, and consequent distress as soon as the other slender resources of the people are gone.

This is the third time in the last ten years that a partial failure of the potato crop has placed the inhabitants of portions of the congested districts of Ireland in more or less danger of scarcity of food, and it is perfectly evident that the material condition of these districts is such as to render the recurrence of similar periods a certainty whenever the climatic influences are unsavourable to the growth of the potato.

The evil is one which no merely political measures can remedy, and must equally recur whether Ireland is subject to British or Irish rule. It is not possible after the experience of the past, for men of all shades of political opinion, and irrespective of party, to unite and inaugurate such economic measures as will surely, though it may be slowly, remove this constantly recurring cause of dispute and suffering?—Letter to the *Times*, 15th October, 1890.

[FROM THE "IRISH FARMER'S GAZETTE."]

We publish to-day what we think we can well claim to be the most exhaustive and authoritative account of the condition of the Irish potato crop that has been prepared this season. Recognising the importance of obtaining reliable information regarding the actual condition of the crop at a time when so many conflicting reports are current as to the damage done by the blight, we undertook the collection of returns from all parts of the country, and through the kindness of our numerous corres-  
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pondents we are thus enabled to place before our readers the very complete, and we are inclined to think reliable, series of reports which follow. Further than to thus introduce them and prominently acknowledge our indebtedness to the correspondents who have so kindly and so promptly favoured us with their opinions, we need say no more regarding the reports in this place. They speak for themselves as to the state of the crop in the various localities specified :—

**Antrim.**—Antrim.—About two-thirds of average yield on low farms. Little disease except in moory, undrained bottoms. On mountain farms the yield is small, the cold summer having checked the growth of the tubers.

**Antrim.**—Antrim.—In this part of Antrim union early potatoes were an average crop, but many diseased ones—I should say about one-half. Later sorts are a good average, and not badly diseased. In mountain districts I believe the crop is almost a failure.

**Antrim.**—Ballymoney.—County Antrim could give a better report ten days later, as about here they are only beginning to raise the potatoes. Magnum Bonums average crop, and little disease. Champions, and Irish Whites, of good quality, and not much diseased; but the bulk will be quite one-third less than the average. Scotch Whites not half a crop, and badly diseased.

**Armagh.**—Killyrea.—The potato crop in this neighbourhood is very good on light, dry land—far heavier than last year; but on wet, heavy land not so good, with more black potatoes; but still a fair crop of good potatoes left. Owing to the low price of imported potatoes at planting time, a great many of the farmers changed their seed.

**Armagh.**—Armagh.—Not commenced to dig out potatoes yet; but from what I have seen, will average about half a crop. As a rule, the tubers are small and not very good to eat. On heavy clay and moorland they are badly diseased. I have seen reclaimed bog and mountain where the crop would not seed the ground; other places fairly large and plentiful, but fully 75 per cent. of them completely rotten. On light, sharp, dry land crop good, but tubers small and not much diseased.

**Carlow.**—Bagnalstown.—Potatoes have turned out a fair crop here. Very few diseased, except in the mountain districts.

**Carlow.**—Carlow.—Yield under average; quality average.

**Carlow.**—Hacketstown.—Owing to lateness of this district, very little potatoes dug out yet. The crop varies very much;

some have about ten barrels (24 st.) to the acre, and others up to 40 barrels to the acre. Early sown potatoes about one-fourth black; late sown potatoes about one-half black.

**Carlow.**—Rathvilly.—Potato digging is now about half way through in this locality, and they certainly will not turn out more than half a crop of sound eating potatoes, and these of a small size. The tubers that were affected with disease all rotted away, leaving only the medium sized and small ones.

**Cavan.**—Cavan.—In some places in this district the crop is quite up to the average; my own, in good land, is a good crop. The general crop is, however, much under the average.

**Cavan.**—Bailieboro'.—Potatoes very bad both in yield and quality; have not been as bad for years.

**Cavan.**—Killeshandra.—As yet there is scarce half the potato crop raised in this locality. The yield is about a fourth under average, and the quality of any planted after the middle of April is inferior—more so in ground where two or more crops have been grown.

**Clare.**—Ennistymon.—In this district the yield is about one-fourth under average, and the quality in wet, undrained lands is exceedingly bad, but there is no probability of anything approaching a famine.

**Clare.**—Tulla.—The potato crop is very variable. My own are fair; no large tubers; but those that remain are very sound—about a three-quarter crop. Some of my neighbours say the crop is good enough; others say they have none. No fear of a famine here.

**Cork.**—Bantry.—The crop very deficient in some parts of this union, and the yield will only be about one-fourth of an average. In other parts the crop is quite gone, and farmers are about to plough the fields.

**Cork.**—Carrigaline.—In the good lands about here where the potato has been properly cultivated in drills the crop is an average one, but on inferior land, of which there is a great quantity, the crop is a failure. The district is very thinly populated; the people require a change of seed. I am advising a change from limestone land to brownstone, and *vice versa*. Where phosphate has been used along with farm-yard manure the crop is much better than elsewhere.

**Cork.**—Cork.—Crop much under average; in some cases quality good.

**Cork.**—Rathcormack.—Yield very variable—with cultivation good and circumstances favourable, a good crop, with the reverse a bad one; general result something over a half crop. Little disease of tubers; on dry soils quality good.

**Donegal.**—Bundoran.—Potatoes are bad here; very much under average in both yield and quality.

**Donegal.**—Dunfanaghy.—Not enough potatoes dug here as yet to see result.

**Donegal.**—Milford.—The yield and quality of the potato crop in this district is very bad. As digging is progressing there are worse accounts every day.

**Down.**—Downpatrick.—The potatoes in this district are a much better crop than was expected some weeks ago. Quality good, and in some places the crop is over average. Champions have suffered in wet or heavy lands by disease.

**Down.**—Kilkeel.—Potatoes are turning out well in this district. Farmers are busy digging, and all report a good crop; very little blight shewing itself, and big prices are looked forward to.

**Down.**—Newtownards.—Champions—Earlyplanted potatoes on fairly dry soils, a good average crop, and quality excellent; fewer diseased tubers than during the past two seasons. Of Magnums there is an average crop of splendid quality; no disease. Skerries—Small crop; quality good. On wet soils all varieties are poor quality.

**Down.**—Banbridge — Yield one-third less than usual. Quality exceedingly good and dry. One-third the crop is diseased, the early potatoes being much the worst. Champions are not quite so bad. I am told they are not so diseased around here as in surrounding districts where the land is low and damp.

**Dublin.**—Blanchardstown.—The potato crop in this district is now lifted, and is considerably under average; with me it is about average, and quality good, and, in fact, a satisfactory crop.

**Dublin.**—Finglas.—The potato crop has not yet been lifted in North Dublin union; but, from what I hear, they are a very uneven crop. Later on I may be able to give a better report.

**Dublin.**—Glasnevin.—Potatoes have turned out much better than was expected a few weeks ago. The fine, dry weather we have had seems to have arrested the progress of the disease. About a fourth of the crop diseased.

**Fermanagh.**—Enniskillen.—In good land the crop is an average yield, while the quality is fair. In poor, mountain land there is a very bad yield, and the quality is also bad. This also refers to wet clay land.

**Fermanagh.**—Enniskillen.—Potatoes, as a rule, of bad quality, and about two-thirds of a crop only. Disease, however, is very local; some places have none and first-rate potatoes. Early set potatoes are quite as bad as late set ones.

**Galway.**—Clonbern.—Both yield and quality are very bad in this neighbourhood; about one-third of a crop in Glenamaddy union, and nothing in part of the Tuam unions.

**Galway.**—Galway.—It is only now that the potato crop is being dug; the weather is most favourable, being the best we have had for months. The reports are very conflicting—in some places the crop is almost a failure, in others very middling, and in others good. Judging from all the reports and from what I see coming to market, I would say that it would be a good guess to say that in this district we shall have two-thirds of a crop. All complain of the smallness of the tubers, which, of course, injures the produce.

**Galway.**—Gort.—The yield and condition very disappointing. It is feared the major portion of sound tubers, even such as they are, will not keep, except where grown on warm, light soils. In many fields labour of digging out exceeds the value of crop.

**Galway.**—Tuam.—The accounts about the state of the potato crop are so conflicting that it is very difficult to form a decided opinion about the quantity, compared with other years. There is only a small portion of the crop dug at present, and the most general account is that there is only a half crop, and the quality much inferior to other years; but, as a great many persons (myself included) have a fair crop, I estimate the crop as forty per cent. under average.

**Galway West.**—I regret to say the potato crop on the west coast is very bad this season, except in a few instances. I have no doubt in almost all cases, if properly treated, the crop would not be the failure that it is. Where sown in fresh land and properly manured, care being taken to remove all weeds, and not planting the sets too thickly, the crop is even this year good. In planting potatoes care should be taken not to have slits or sets looser than from 12 to 15 inches. I know some places where they are put only 9 or 10 inches apart. Where this is so the stalks grow up thin and weak, and are not able to resist the blight, particularly a wet year, because then they grow up weak, and have not sufficient air to form potatoes in time. In old worn

out land the crop is very bad. My experience is that, if properly treated, there is no crop holds better, and it gives much less trouble than turnips. I have myself about three Irish acres. I don't think I ever had a better crop. You have my name and address if any one doubts what I say. I will let you see the crop, or any one on your behalf.

**Galway.**—Portumna.—The potato crop in the Portumna districts and union is very bad, the tubers being small and wet and the yield very poor, with a large portion black, at least three-fourths, while in neighbouring districts, viz., Abbey, about nine miles off, I am told the crop there was never better. In my own neighbourhood, Earlston, the bog potatoes are wonderfully good and free from blight.

**Galway.**—Woodford.—Since the end of August the potato crop has gone from bad to worse. In most cases only about one-fourth remains sound. It is generally admitted that the crop has not been so poor since 1847.

**Kerry.**—Castleisland.—The best potatoes in this district are not more than half a crop, and barely so good. They are very soft and soapy, owing to their being so unripe, as they were struck very early by the blight. In most cases they are not worth digging, being so small and so much diseased.

**Kerry.**—Tralee.—Potato digging unusually late this season in this district. The crop is not turning up more than half in quantity and of only medium quality. In cases of early planting last spring the crop is, however, digging a very fair average in quantity and quality, but, taking the crop all round, it is not more than half.

**Kerry.**—Killarney.—In this district the yield of the potato crop is not anywhere more than half the average yield, and the tubers are of a very inferior quality.

**Kerry.**—Listowel.—I have carefully examined the potatoes in this district (Listowel union), principally all round Listowel and on to Ballybunnion. The crop is most variable; in some places good, in others only half a crop; places very bad. I inspected a con-acre field let by me, and the crop all round (ten acres) was good; some very good. Everywhere weeds have grown to an extent I never saw before, and it will cost a good deal to clear them out of the land.

**Kerry.**—Listowel.—Potatoes vary very much. In some places a very poor crop, and small; in others a fairly good crop, but so wet and bad tasted not fit to eat; in others a very fair crop, and

very good to eat. On the whole, not more than half last year's crop. Any potatoes fit for eating by the poorer people will be used up by the first of the coming year.

**Kildare.**—Athy.—The potato crop in this district is the worst since 1847. In most places it is a complete failure, even on good dry soil. They are wretched; in fact, hardly worth the trouble of taking out of the ground. In cold, wet soil they are absolutely worthless.

**Kildare.**—Naas.—Where dug, the potato crop has turned out an average yield, with about one-fourth diseased. Where sown late, with worn out seed, there are more unfavourable results.

**Kildare.**—Maynooth.—I have had a good opportunity while partridge shooting in the district about Maynooth and Kilcock of judging as to the state of the potato crop. I had no idea it could be so bad; fully three-fourths gone, and in every case the men digging them said they were wet and badly flavoured; some said they could hardly be eaten, they tasted so bad, and had the colour and appearance of yellow soap.

**Kilkenny.**—Thomastown.—Hardly any potatoes dug as yet. Those that are are fairly good, though the tubers are rather small.

**Kilkenny.**—Callan.—In this neighbourhood the yield of potatoes is heavier than last year, and the quality good. There is but a small percentage of the tubers diseased.

**Kilkenny.**—Kilkenny.—Produce smaller in size and a larger proportion of diseased than for some years past, but the crop by no means a failure.

**Kilkenny.**—Castlecomer.—Potatoes where planted early are fairly free from disease, but quantity and quality inferior to last year. Late sown potatoes indifferent; quality and quantity deficient and a good number black; tubers generally deficient in size.

**King's.**—Parsonstown.—Yield under average. Potatoes small. Some disease, but by no means a total failure of crop; in most places there is an abundance to provide for winter requirements.

**King's.**—Tullamore.—The potato crop fairly good; not many black, but size rather small. As a general rule, crops will be about one-fourth less than last years. Growth was stopped by the blight before the crop matured.

**King's.**—Tullamore.—The only information I can give regarding the potato crop about here is that they are good for 566]

eating, some of them black, and the general opinion is that they will be a good half crop. Very little dug up to this time. A good deal depends on the weather during the month.

**Leitrim.**—Carrigallen.—From all that I have seen I should say that the yield of sound potatoes is less than half the average of most years in this district. They are very small in size.

**Leitrim.**—Mohill.—As a rule, the potato crop is not good. In some places it is, especially where farmers have changed their seed every few years and planted them in drills, but even on those farms it is not as good as last year. The failure is greatly exaggerated. Farmers cannot expect to have good potatoes while they continue bad farming, never changing their seed till a total failure comes, and planting them always in ridges or lazy beds, without draining their land by thorough drainage, and not manuring or weeding them.

**Leitrim.**—Mohill.—Potatoes in this district have turned out even worse than was at first anticipated. The only place where they are at all sound is in an occasional piece of fresh ground; in old ground they are not worth the cost of digging.

**Limerick.**—Croom.—I must modify my former report as to the potato crop. Instead of 33 per cent. under average, 50 per cent. will take place.

**Limerick.**—Croom.—The potato crop is very variable. Where grown from imported seed on light land they are good, both for eating and as a crop. On rich, heavy, or wet land they are bad. For this locality, I consider they are about 25 per cent. under average of past few years. Not as many black as I thought there should be after such a wet summer.

**Limerick.**—Kilmallock.—Yield generally bad. Potatoes small, being only partially matured when affected by the blight. The quantity very deficient, with few exceptions. Ridges not heavily earthed seem to have done best.

**Limerick.**—Stradbally.—Accounts vary. Not many dug yet; about half to three-quarters of a crop on the average; pits covered with diseased haulm in all cases. Imported Champions worst of all. My own Regents, Orkneys, Magnums good crops and good at table.

**Londonderry.**—Coleraine.—The potato crop in this district is a good one. The yield has been so good that the “touched” potatoes interfere in no way with its success. Quality generally superior.

**Londonderry.**—Limavady.—As far as I can see, the yield of potatoes is good, and the diseased tubers not much more than average.

**Longford.**—Longford.—The potato crop in this union is a very poor one; not more than half sound, and these of a very poor quality, small and soft. With myself, however, they are very good—better than last season; the secret of which is high moulding in drills 28 inches apart.

**Longford.**—Granard.—Potatoes only about half a crop and very inferior in quality.

**Louth.**—Ardee.—There is no blight in this part of Louth. I have just finished digging an acre, and there are only about 1 cwt. damaged potatoes in all. Yield medium; quality good.

**Louth.**—Dundalk.—The potato crop in this district is a very fair average. No complaints as to yield or quality.

**Louth.**—Dundalk.—Potato crop is slightly under the average, but no disease. Quality good.

**Louth.**—Dundalk.—The potatoes in this neighbourhood are a very fine crop, the tubers being large and mealy. Where the newly imported seed has not been planted, however, over one-fourth of the crop is bad. Not so much damaged where the new seed has been sown.

**Mayo.**—Ballinrobe.—Only commenced digging out the potato crop this week. The yield I should estimate at a third less than a full crop. The tubers are, generally speaking, small, and the quality in some parts inferior, and in others very good, but in none have I heard of or seen much of the disease. Taking it altogether, the crop is a much better one than was expected.

**Mayo.**—Ballyglass.—On dry, fresh land the crop is pretty fair, but on low, wet land it is very bad; also on old, tilled out land.

**Mayo.**—Bohola.—This being the worst populated district in Ireland (Swinford Union), people are wholly dependent on English earnings and the potato crop, the latter of which is a complete failure. The yield is small and unfit for use. Many fields will remain undug, not being worth the labour of getting.

**Mayo.**—Castlebar.—The yield in this district is average, and the quality fair, except in a very few instances. The average crop is, of course, below last year and the year before, but fully up to previous averages.

**Mayo.**—Westport.—The crop is now partially dug, and the yield, taking the whole of the union into account, will not be one-

sixth an average crop. The quality in a few townlands is good, though the tubers are nowhere large. The great bulk of the crop in this union is unfit for human food.

**Meath.**—Dunsany.—Potatoes only partially dug. The yield and quality will be good; about one-third diseased.

**Meath.**—Dunshaughlin.—The yield in this district would average about five tons sound, with a few good for eating of a moderate size. This where imported seed was used, and grown in fresh land after lea oats; in very rich land quite worthless, and nearly all damaged. This applies particularly to where a second crop is grown, as on labourers' plots.

**Meath.**—Kells.—Potatoes, where grown on land properly prepared are about half of last year's yield. Where grown on lea land, in lazy-beds, one-third of a crop of last year; but where planted on the lea in beds, as is much practised, without turning the sod, almost a failure. Imported seed not much better than good home grown. All, however, very good for use.

**Meath.**—Trim.—The potato crop in this district is variable. On some farms it is up to an average yield; on most it is not. This applies both to the quality and quantity of the crop.

**Monaghan.**—Clones.—General crop of potatoes very bad; not more than one-third of an average crop sound. Next season's seed will hardly be got saved in this district.

**Monaghan.**—Monaghan.—In this district potatoes in a good many places are a full crop; others medium; heavy and wet soils very bad.

**Queen's.**—Mountmellick.—The potato crop is turning out worse than was anticipated. In the higher districts they are reported as not worth the labour of digging. The same on bog land. On the most suitable land for growing potatoes there will not be more, in weight, than half an average crop of marketable potatoes; immatured, and of bad quality. The disease is still spreading amongst them. If this showery, damp weather continues there will not be many sound potatoes left at the usual digging time.

**Queen's.**—Mountmellick.—No potatoes taken out here except for immediate use. Farmers are too busy at preparing corn for market. In two or three weeks a more general account of potatoes can be given.

**Queen's.**—Ballacolla.—Speaking as to my own immediate neighbourhood—that of Aghaboe, in the district of Kildellig—

the whole crop is a short one. On my own place it is tolerably good; but with a very few exceptions the adjoining farmers will not get more than half of what is considered a good crop.

**Queen's.**—Mountmellick.—In this district the crop is light in yield, but quality is good.

**Queen's.**—Portarlington.—The Champion is the principal potato grown in this district. There is little or no disease in the tubers where grown on dry land, and their quality is good. The crop, however, is a little over one-half of last year. Where Magnum Bonums and potatoes of similar kidney type are grown the crop is good and free from disease. The writer will show at the Royal Dublin Society's exhibition five new seedlings of the third generation from Magnum Bonum, all free from disease.

**Roscommon.**—Castlerea.—Quite up to the average of last year as regards quantity, but not so large nor of as good quality. In some places, where not properly tilled, a poor crop.

**Roscommon.**—Roscommon.—About one-third of the potato crop in this district is diseased. The yield is fairly good, the potatoes being numerous, but not large. In many places they have matured badly, but recent dry weather has partially remedied this defect.

**Sligo.**—Sligo.—One-third yield, and quality middling.

**Tipperary.**—Ballymackey.—Potatoes will not be dug here till the end of month. They are an extremely uneven crop, and will be under average. In some places the return will not be equal to the seed put in; in others a half crop may be expected. Imported seed not in any case better than home grown. Blight began on the night of July 16th.

**Tipperary.**—Cashel.—The potato crop is turning out just as I anticipated. My own (about seven statute acres) and everywhere, when well tilled and clean, I find an average crop; where badly tilled and dirty, about half a crop, particularly when planted in wet land. The fact is, potatoes of late years have been so plentiful, and hardly saleable, that farmers put them in anywhere and anyhow, and the result is a failure.

**Tipperary.**—Nenagh.—Potatoes are bad both in yield and quality. The general run of the tubers is small, and digging out something less than half an average crop.

**Tipperary.**—Roscrea.—Yield is average in well-cultivated fields, but some complain of the tubers not being as dry as last year. This is owing to the wet season.

**Tyrone.**—Donaghmore.—Potato raising not yet general in this district. We began this morning. Our produce will be 570]

under average, especially Champions; many small and not matured. We fear the small farmers will have a bad crop, especially in poor and wet soils.

**Tyrone.**—Omagh.—The potato crop in this union is far under average both in quantity and quality. In mountain districts the crop is not worth digging. Have not begun to store the potatoes yet, owing to harvest operations not being quite completed.

**Waterford.**—Kilmacthomas.—The yield of potatoes in this district is about an average on nearly every farm. The quality is generally good where the yield is good. I have seen a great difference even on the same farm: in one field they were very good, in another nearly all black, and what were white were very poor in quality.

**Waterford.**—Portlaw.—I have had the opinion of three different farmers living some miles asunder, who are just digging out their potatoes. The first says: "I have never had a better crop all my life." The second: "A good crop both in quantity and quality." The third: "A very fair crop, and good in quality." My own experience is, a medium crop, of excellent quality.

**Waterford.**—Youghal.—On the sea coast, in the unions of Youghal and Dungarvan, the crop not more than one-fifth; inland they improve from one-half to an average crop, according as soil, seed, and tillage were suitable. In the union of Lismore the crop generally is a good average, except in mountain districts and wet unsuitable soils. Here the crop is about one-half, and of inferior quality.

**Westmeath.**—Athlone.—The potato crop in this district is one-third under average of the last three years; quality fairly good, not many black potatoes being noticeable. The low yield is caused by smallness of size and fewness in number of tubers under stalks.

**Westmeath.**—Moate.—Potato digging has only just begun in this district. So far as I can see, any potatoes in new ground are a full crop, with a good many black ones. Those in old, tilled land are not so plentiful.

**Westmeath.**—Mullingar.—The potato crop is only about half dug in this union; so far it is only a very poor crop, I should say about one-third of an average, being both small and thin in the ground. The disease is not quite so bad as was expected; however, on low-lying land the rot is very prevalent.

**Westmeath.**—Mullingar.—The potato crop, in my opinion, will be fully one-third short of last season's abundant crop in

this district. The sound tubers are fair in quality; they are selling in the Mullingar market at 6½d. per stone at present.

**Westmeath.**—Mullingar.—A variable crop of potatoes; some very bad, some much better than was expected. The tubers are smaller in size than usual, but good for table use; about one-fourth diseased; my own excellent. On the whole, crop about one-third short.

**Wexford.**—Enniscorthy.—Potatoes here are generally untouched in the ground, hands being still employed thatching and preparing for sowing tawny oats. The potatoes are small, but not much diseased.

**Wexford.**—New Ross.—The potato crop is not more than one-half in quantity on the whole. Early sown is best; late, very thin, small, and wet.

**Wexford.**—New Ross.—In this union potato digging has not yet become general, but enough has been dug to show that our hopes of the crop in July have not been realized, as the late planted crop is poor—not so much that the blight has attacked the tubers as that they have not matured—even the large potatoes are soft. The yield and quality are poor as compared with the last two years.

**Wexford.**—New Ross.—I have dug half my crop, and they have turned out good and plentiful, but this portion was sown early. The other half was sown late, and as far as I have dug they are small, and about two-thirds of a good crop. I think this represents the true state of the case for the union of New Ross.

**Wicklow.**—Baltinglass.—Potato crop about half an average one, but in some low-lying fields, where the June frosts burned the tops, not more than the seed of the land will be dug out.

**Wicklow.**—Bray.—In this neighbourhood potatoes are a fair average and not many bad as yet; stalks held green a long time. In the Ballytore district stalks withered early. On dry land a fair crop; on moory land inferior and small; but in both places crop less than last year.

**Wicklow.**—Rathdrum.—Potato under average in quantity, with half crop severely blighted. Many gardens around almost totally blighted.

**Wicklow.**—Rathdrum.—I have scarcely one-third of a crop fit for market; there are a great deal of small, rubbishy tubers of no use but for pig feeding. I have been through my neighbours' fields and I find they are much the same. In general they are good for table use. I change my seed every second year.—*Irish Farmers' Gazette*, October 18th, 1890.

Subjoined will be found a few additional reports regarding the condition of the potato crop. The account from the Aughnacloy district of the County Tyrone—with which we have been kindly favoured by Mr. Montray of Favour Royal—is of special interest by reason of the exact return given of the yield, and the percentage of diseased tubers.

**Limerick.**—Croom.—I have now ploughed out my potatoes, which were fresh Scottish seed this year, and grown on new land. The crop is very good and perfect for eating. The black ones were all about seed size, and numerous. If all were good it would have been a very large crop; indeed, as it is, now that they are picked over, I have a good average crop. Some people about me have a bad yield; but, on the whole, much better than they expected.

**Tyrone.**—Aughnacloy.—Seeing so many reports of bad crops of potatoes, and at same time seeing many fair crops in this neighbourhood, I measured off 1 rood, Irish plantation measure, and had the produce weighed on my weigh-bridge. The rood so measured was in the middle of a field, and taken full length of field, except a small bit measured off another set of drills to make up the rood:—

	Tons.	cwt.	qrs.
Sound potatoes, Champions	...	3	1 3
Damage and refuse	...	0	8 2
Total	...	3	10 1
Sound potatoes, at low price of 2s. per cwt.	£6	3	6
$8\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. damaged, at 8d. per cwt.	...	0	5 8
Value of rood	...	£6	9 2

The above rood was measured for a man in my employment, who got a rood of potatoes as part wages.—*Irish Farmers' Gazette*, November 1st, 1890.

[FROM SPECIAL COMMISSIONER "SHEFFIELD DAILY TELEGRAPH."]

Wherever I went, as I have already stated, I found potatoes, and for the most part they were fairly good crops. I know of no district of Ireland where the crop has totally failed, and I never met a man who knew where there was such a district. So far as there is failure, it is owing to the incompetence or sloth

of the tenants, and not to any action of the landlords or of the British Government. Whatever failure there may be, it will not be serious, and the people of Ireland are quite capable of dealing with it, if they have a mind, without any assistance from American "charity" or from Imperial funds.—*Sheffield Telegraph*, October 25th, 1890.

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#### THE "NEW YORK HERALD" REPORT.

Mr. Gordon Bennett, proprietor of the *New York Herald*, who, in 1879 and 1880, raised a Special Fund for the relief of distress, states :—

"We have sent an entirely unprejudiced and highly capable correspondent to Ireland for the purpose of obtaining for the readers of the *New York Herald* a trustworthy account of the actual facts with regard to the alleged scarcity of food. Some of his experiences will be found described elsewhere. The general conclusion at which he has thus far arrived is that there is likely to be a scarcity in some districts, but no famine. He thus confirms, in the main, the accounts which have been received from other independent sources, and from official quarters."

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#### [“THE TORONTO DAILY MAIL.”]

The Dublin *Freeman* of October 11th—a Nationalist organ—quotes the highest price for the best potatoes at 3s. 6d. for 112 lbs. This is equal to 69 cents. per bag of 90 lbs. The market price on Saturday last in Toronto was from 40 to 60 cents. per bag. A potato famine in Ireland would cause famine prices, but 69 cents. per bag for the very best potatoes shows that happily there is no famine as yet.—*Toronto Daily Mail*, October 29th, 1890.

## LAND COMMISSION REPORT.

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The following summary of official reports of the Land Commission appear in the *Times* of December 10th, 1890.

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A Parliamentary paper was issued on December 6, 1890, containing a report (received November 11, 1890) upon the crops, compiled from returns sent in by the assistant commissioners, valuers, and scrutineers in the employment of the Irish Land Commission. The greater part of the paper consists of a tabular statement with regard to the potato crop, containing minute details of about seventy unions, such as the average yield compared with former years, the size, the probable supply of seed available for next spring, the varieties grown in each district, the price, and the general opinion as to the causes of the failure.

Returns are also given as to general crops in the same unions, and in only one case is the report "below average," while in most cases the return is "very good," "abundant," or "above average."

The following is a summary of the report:—

"The following report is compiled from information supplied by the assistant commissioners, valuers, and scrutineers of prices employed by the Irish Land Commission, and refers to unions in the districts in which they reside, and to those portions of unions which have come under their observation when inspecting holdings for the purpose of fixing judicial rents.

"The potato disease has produced the worst results on the western seaboard from Derry to Cork, and also on poor, cold, wet lands generally throughout Ireland; the result in most instances has been to produce small and unmatured, rather than diseased, tubers.

"The disease has produced the worst effect in those instances in which some or other of the following conditions prevailed:—Undrained land, bad cultivation, continued use of the same seed, continued cropping with potatoes on the same land, want of proper care of the seed throughout the winter, cutting the sets too small.

"The circumstances being otherwise similar, the following conditions usually produced the best results:—Frequent change of seed, use of good seed, planting in fresh ground, early planting, good cultivation, well-drained land.

"In the counties of Derry, Down, Antrim, and Louth, the crop was, with few exceptions, very good.

"Varieties reported as untouched by disease are: 'The General,' 'The Colonel,' 'Bloomers,' 'Railways.'

"Varieties reported as very good disease resisters are: 'Bruce,' 'Magnum Bonum,' 'Imperator,' 'Sutton's Abundance.'

"Varieties reported as fairly good disease resisters are: 'Skerries' and 'Irish Whites.'

Another Parliamentary paper contains extracts from reports upon the potato crop of 1890 made for the Land Commission in certain unions of the counties of Clare, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo, Sligo, Waterford, and Wexford. These are all drawn up by assistant commissioners, and one of these gentlemen, Mr. T. S. Porter, prefixes a general report which will apply to any portion of Ireland. Mr. Porter says that potato seed imported from America direct to Ireland seldom does well, and is not to be relied on. The great bulk of the seed potato supply for Ireland has of late years been drawn from the counties of Fife and Forfar. Mr. Porter suggests that if seed is purchased in the spring of 1891, it shall be bought in fresh districts, and that in purchasing seed in Scotland, special regard shall be had to the district for which it is required in Ireland. A great deal of harm, he adds, has been done in many districts in Ireland by the boards of guardians spending the money they borrowed in 1880 for the purchase of seed in buying local seed grown in the district, and re-selling to the farmers. This seed was of little use and caused great complaint. The tuber called the "Champion" is now grown almost universally over Ireland. It is an enormous cropper, and gives a large supply of small potatoes not good for eating, but of great use for feeding fowls and pigs. It has two disadvantages—it is a very late potato, and it will not keep well after March. Nevertheless, it is more popular than the "Magnum Bonum." Mr. Porter thinks that it is desirable to produce a potato which would take the place of the "Champion," which is now, undoubtedly, deteriorating.

Mr. Porter concludes his general remarks by the statement that whereas the total amount borrowed under the Seed Supply Act of 1880 was nearly £600,000, not more than 24,000 tons at £5 a ton, or £120,000, would be wanted in 1891.

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